Strategies in Emergency Preparedness for Transportation-Dependent Populations
About Me…

Personally…
• I am the mother of a child on the autism spectrum

Professionally…
• Certified Safety and Security Officer, MPA, and the Quality Assurance Director for Ride Connection in Portland, Oregon.
• I have worked in and around emergency management and transportation in various capacities for close to 20 years
• Co-Chair of the Oregon Vulnerable Populations Emergency Preparedness Consortium, and Multnomah County Emergency Management’s Equity, Access and Functional Needs Task Force
Ride Connection is a non-profit based in Portland, Oregon, that works with community partners to provide and coordinate transportation options primarily for older adults and people with disabilities.

Ride Connection and its network of partners serve individuals in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties.
What do we do?

• Ride Connection’s services are all about meeting the transportation needs of each individual by offering a variety of transportation options;

• From public transit training and grocery shopping shuttles, to life sustaining dialysis trips, our priority is to ensure every person has access to safe, reliable and accessible transportation....
Access to transportation means mobility.

*Mobility opens doors.*

It allows a person to be independent and it offers a way to access life's essentials and connect with community.
Transportation challenges faced by vulnerable populations during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and other recent emergency events have demonstrated that a lack of access to transportation in times of emergency can result in death or other negative outcomes.
The plan for today:

PLANNING:

• Engaging customers with disabilities and other functional and access needs in the emergency planning process

• Working with Emergency Management partners to identify needs and a common language

PREPAREDNESS:

• Mitigating vulnerabilities in the functional and access needs communities

RESPONSE:

• Current efforts by Ride Connection to engage community transportation partners in emergency planning, preparedness, response and recovery efforts
Before the “Bad Thing” happens...
Engaging our customers in the emergency planning process...

• How will our customers be served in a disaster?

• What can we do to help vulnerable populations prepare for and be resilient in disaster; AND

• How can we help emergency management partners better understand the role, capabilities and needs of transportation partners in emergency situations?
Like the proverbial canary in a coal mine, the well-being of the most vulnerable in our communities during severe weather or emergency events may serve as an indicator of how well we are planning to protect the general population.

Confronting our shortfalls should motivate us to more effectively plan for future disasters.
Who are the populations we’re talking about?

Individuals made vulnerable by:

- financial circumstances or place of residence
- health
- age (young or old)
- functional or developmental status
- ability to communicate effectively
- presence of chronic or terminal illness or disability
- populations less able than others to safeguard their own needs and interests adequately
“Vulnerable populations” are often constrained by:

- Poverty
- Physical or mental disability
- Health issues
- Low English proficiency
- Transportation disadvantage
- Age

...and especially by combinations of these.
What role do people with disabilities, functional and access needs play in emergency preparedness and response?
Equity, Access and Functional Needs Task Force

EVERYONE
EVERYWHERE
The CMIST Model

Communication:
- This category includes people who have limited or no ability to speak, see, hear or understand. During an emergency, people with communication needs may not be able to hear announcements, see signs, understand messages or verbalize their concerns.

Medical:
- People in this group require assistance in managing activities of daily living such as eating, dressing, grooming, transferring and going to the toilet. It includes managing chronic, terminal or contagious health conditions (such as ongoing treatment and administration of medications, IV therapy, catheters, tube feeding, dialysis, oxygen, operating life sustaining equipment...) During an emergency, people may be separated from family and friends. Early identification of these needs and intervention can avoid deterioration of health.
The CMIST Model

Independence:

- This includes people who are able to function independently if they have their assistive devices and/or equipment. Items consist of mobility aids (such as wheelchairs, walkers, canes, crutches); communication aids; medical equipment, (such as catheters, oxygen, syringes, medications); and service animals. Individuals may become separated from their assistive equipment and/or animals in an emergency. Those at risk whose needs are recognized and restored early are able to maintain their independence and manage in mass shelters. Effectively meeting their functional needs prevents secondary complications.

Supervision:

- People with supervision needs may include those who have psychiatric conditions (such as dementia, Alzheimer, Schizophrenia, depression or severe mental illness); addiction problems; brain injury, or become anxious due to transfer trauma. During an emergency, some people with mental illness may be able to function well while others require a more protected and supervised setting.
The CMIST Model

Transportation:

• Emergency response requires mobility and this category includes people who are unable to drive because of disability, age, temporary injury, poverty, addiction, legal restriction or have no access to a vehicle.

• Wheelchair accessible transportation may be necessary.

• Pre-planning evacuation needs helps prevent chaos during an emergency and many people can function independently once evacuated to safety.
Assessing Current Plans…

• Working with emergency management partners to ensure that emergency response plans include Everyone... Everywhere

• Evaluating the ADA Accessibility and Civil Rights compliance inherent in the emergency plans and processes of local jurisdictions

• Ensuring best practices for people with disabilities, access and functional needs are employed in planning and training.
Equity, Access and Functional Needs Task Force

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Public Health Workbook: To Define, Locate, and Reach Special, Vulnerable, and At-risk Populations in an Emergency
This CDC workbook is intended to provide public health and emergency preparedness planners with better ways to communicate health and emergency information to at-risk individuals with access and functional needs for all-hazards events through step-by-step instructions, resources guides and templates.

A Toolkit for State and Local Planning and Response
This interactive tool helps state and local health departments better identify, plan for, and respond to at-risk individuals with access and functional needs. This web-based GIS tool uses US Census data to identify at-risk populations with access and functional needs, ranging from frail older adults, children, populations with limited English proficiency, and populations with limited resources.

ADA Best Practices Tool Kit for State and Local Governments, Chapter 7 Addendum 2: The ADA and Emergency Shelters: Access for All in Emergencies and Disasters
ALL DISASTERS ARE LOCAL

• Schedule a preparedness training with partner groups and organizations

• Prepare yourself and your friends and neighbors
What can people with Disabilities, Access or Functional Needs do?

• Get involved with their local emergency management, CERT, NERT, or NET group

• Have a seat (and a voice) at the planning table – know what’s in their community emergency plan.
Coordinating, Collaborating, Communicating

Getting started:

1. Transportation & Emergency Management begin to talk- is there a champion? Is leadership buy-in needed?
2. Collect population information- define and locate vulnerable populations
3. Assess hazards & community vulnerability
4. Assess agency resources- current plans? committees? staff?
5. Identify existing networks- e.g. Ride Connection, community service links
6. Keep a contact list
The key to an effective emergency response is… Collaboration.

- Building partnerships between emergency management, community based transportation providers, and human service organizations
- Developing and cultivating a transportation network
Building a Network...

- Transit and paratransit agencies
- Community-Based Transportation providers
- Rural transportation agencies
- Emergency medical transport
- Schools/School Bus Providers
- Faith based partners
- Independent/Assisted Living Communities
- Non-emergency medical transportation
- Private coach companies
- Public and private transportation providers
- Taxis & TNC’s
- Bus Sales dealers
Determining Network Capacity

• Can you tell me a little bit about the types of services your agency provides related to transportation to transportation-dependent populations or populations with specialized needs? How do you accommodate service animals?

• While not frequent, our region may be impacted by severe windstorms and snowstorms. Can you talk about the role your agency has played in these types of weather events? Did you close or did you continue to provide services?
  • Follow up: what was your experience providing services to clients? What were the major challenges? Characteristics of clients who were of key concern?

• Have you thought about the role your organization can play in an emergency situation such as a flood, or other evacuation event?
  • Follow up: If you haven’t seen a role for yourself, why not? And if you have, what do you see as the challenges for actually fulfilling that role? Are liability and/or reimbursement barriers?
  • Follow up: If you do see a role for your organization, can you describe what planning or preparedness efforts you’ve made? Do you have an updated emergency plan? For CBOs – to what extent does it address transportation?
Determining Network Capacity

• Do you have a relationship with any of the emergency managers in the communities you serve?

• In terms of preparedness and planning, what do you see as the important steps or areas that organizations would need to address in order to be ready to respond in an emergency?
  
  • Follow up: What type of training or support would you need?

• In emergency transportation, communication is very important. How do you currently communicate with clients or the community you serve on a daily basis? Do you maintain rosters?

• How do you communicate with your drivers or with transportation agencies that serve your clients?

• Please identify all agencies you see as stakeholders and/or potential resources in emergency transportation in our region that we should reach out to.

• In developing an emergency planning template for transportation providers, do you have any specific suggestions or recommendations about what needs to be included?
The Key to an effective emergency response is... Collaboration.

- Resources to assist Emergency Management
- Understanding available transportation resources
- Agreements to protect your investments/resources and liability considerations
- Developing and Nurturing Relationships
A resource capabilities assessment is a detailed inventory of what resources your organization could utilize to support your own customers during an emergency, as well as to participate in community-wide emergency response efforts. It includes an inventory of transit vehicles and their specific characteristics, transit facilities and their capacity to support emergency response, specialized transit equipment and tools that can assist emergency operations, and transit staff and the skill sets they possess.
Resource Capabilities Assessment

This assessment is not just the sum total of your assets; it also considers limitations.

For example, if you plan to continue delivering essential services to your regular customers during an emergency, what is the spare capacity of vehicles and drivers that you can contribute to community emergency response?

How long will it take to mobilize them?

What could you provide if you cancel all but life-sustaining medical transportation? Once mobilized, can you maintain a maximum effort for the next 12, 24, or 48 hours?

What will it take to return to normal after the emergency is over?
Considerations

• It is important that emergency management understands the capabilities and limitations of your transportation program.

• Emergency management may not consider how accessible transportation providers should support emergency response.

• If information is not shared in the planning process, the needs of people with access and functional needs and the resources to serve them may be over- or underestimated.
Considerations

• Asset inventories are most helpful for advance-notice emergencies when plans to strategically pre-position and stage resources can be executed.

• In no-notice events, knowing the number of vehicles and drivers you can provide on short notice may help emergency responders and incident commanders deploy those resources where and when they are needed most.
• Many transportation systems maintain a current vehicle inventory based on class, type, capacity, fuel type and wheelchair accessibility capacity.

• Often these vehicle inventories are reviewed annually as part of the system safety program plan.

• While an inventory is only part of a resource capabilities assessment, it is a key building block and a good way to get started.
Safety, Security, and Emergency Preparedness Plans

• A **system safety program plan** addresses (1) vehicle safety, (2) worker safety, and (3) customer safety. It is intended for wide distribution internally, with partner agencies, and with the public.

• A **system security plan** addresses security threats from criminal or terrorist elements to (1) transit facilities, (2) transit equipment, and (3) transit personnel and customers. Due to the sensitive nature of a System Security Plan, it is distributed internally and shared with partners on a need-to-know basis.

• An agency’s **Emergency Operations Plan** addresses internal issues regarding (1) command and control, (2) continuity of operations, (3) incident response operations, and (4) post-event recovery. EOPs are often shared with emergency management and included as an annex to the overall EOP.
What are we trying to accomplish?

By increasing transportation providers' ability to operate during and respond to emergency situations, improving providers' preparedness, and informing customers about expectations, the following community needs may be met:

- reliable transportation
- safe and secure transportation
- clear information on available transportation options
- culturally relevant information resources
- accessible transportation infrastructure
Lessons Learned

On a day-to-day basis, people who have full communication, health and mobility capabilities do not think about the needs of people who may not.

Key lesson 1: Inclusive planning is essential.
- Include representatives of and advocates for diverse groups of vulnerable people (not stand-ins!) in the planning and exercises. Your network will help you find volunteers!
- Volunteers with service animals, mobility devices (from walkers to scooters), those who have limited English skills, are deaf/hard of hearing, blind / with limited vision, and with moderate cognitive disabilities will provide much more realistic trials and clearance times and will help figure out “what is missing” before the emergency.

Key lesson 2: All successful planning for emergencies is local.
Questions?
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